

DISCIPLESHIP.

REV. G. CAMPBELL MORGAN, D.D.

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BY

REV. G. CAMPBELL MORGAN, D.D.

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TO

MY WIFE,

IN WHOSE UNOBTRUSIVE AND CONSISTENT DISCIPLESHIP,
I HAVE FOUND THE INSPIRATION OF SERVICE, AND
THAT SENSE OF "SANCTUARY" IN THE HOME,
WHICH HAS BEEN LARGELY THE
STRENGTH OF SERVICE ALSO,

I DEDICATE THIS

MY FIRST BOOK.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

THIS booklet is not intended to be a contribution to theology, nor is it addressed to theologians as such. Not that the writer undervalues them or their work. They, of varied schools, have placed him under a debt to them, that he is unable to discharge.

It is intended to be, along practical lines, an aid to the disciples of Jesus, and that, by endeavouring to show in some measure the eminent practicability of being a Christian, in the power of the life communicated by, and sustained in Christ, through the Holy Spirit.

It is further intended, to reveal the actual effect on this present life, for ennobling it in all its relations, and filling it with all joy and beauty, of the ultimate intention of the Master for all His disciples.

To the glory of God, and the help of fellow-disciples, it is therefore prayerfully sent forth on its mission.

G. CAMPBELL MORGAN.

INTRODUCTION

THE author of this book reminds me that it was written at my suggestion. This gives added weight to his request that I should write a few words of introduction.

No one can read these pages with a desire to learn in what discipleship really consists, without discovering that it means a great deal more than to be a Christian in the low conventional sense of that much-abused word. The great crowds which followed the Great Teacher on one occasion convinced Him that there was a misunderstanding between Himself and them, for discipleship rightly apprehended will not be the concern of the multitude (Luke xiv.).

He therefore lifts His voice to reveal this false situation, and in deeply searching words tells the light-minded crowd what true discipleship means. It is to abandon what is dearest and most vital, and to accept what is most painful. It is to give up our wrongs, without which *we* cannot be saved, and to give up our rights, without which *others* cannot be saved. A disciple is one who shares his Master's thoughts, imitates His deeds, walks

in His footsteps, bears His reproach, represents Him worthily among men, and continues His work in the world. We may bear His name, but except on these conditions we cannot be His disciples. To many of Christ's scholars this is a time of testing and examination. They will instinctively turn to what the author has to say about the disciple in sorrow. We shall be greatly surprised if those words do not prevent many a one from being turned back to learn their lesson again. Many break down in these crises in their spiritual history through failure to understand the divine purpose. In this text-book they will learn that

“ The ills we see—

The mysteries of sorrow deep and long,

The dark enigmas of permitted wrong—

Have all one key.

This strange, sad world is but our Father's school ;

All chance and change His love shall grandly overrule.”

May the Great Teacher stamp with His royal approval this first literary effort of my beloved friend the author.

J. GREGORY MANTLE.

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DISCIPLESHIP

I

BECOMING A DISCIPLE

“ At the feet of Jesus
Is the place for me ;
There, a humble learner,
Would I choose to be.”—P. P. BLISS.

“ DISCIPLES ” is the term consistently used in the four Gospels to mark the relationship existing between Christ and His followers. Jesus used it Himself in speaking of them, and they, in speaking of each other. Neither did it pass out of use in the new days of Pentecostal power. It runs right through the Acts of the Apostles. It is interesting also to remember that it was on this wise that the angels thought and spoke of these men: the use of the word in the days of the Incarnation is linked to the use of the word in the apostolic age by the angelic message to the women, “ Go—tell His *disciples* and Peter ” (Mark xvi. 7).

It is somewhat remarkable that the word is not to be found in the Epistles. This is to be accounted for by the fact that the Epistles were addressed to Christians in their corporate capacity as churches, and so spoke of them as members of such, and as the "saints," or separated ones of God. The term "disciple" marks an individual relationship; and though it has largely fallen out of use, it is of the utmost value still in marking the relationship existing between Christ and each single soul, and suggesting our consequent position in all the varied circumstances of everyday living. It is to that study we desire to come in this series of papers.

(i.) The word itself (*μαθητής*) signifies a taught or trained one, and gives us the ideal of relationship. Jesus is the Teacher. He has all knowledge of the ultimate purposes of God for man, of the will of God concerning man, of the laws of God that mark for man the path of his progress and final crowning.

Disciples are those who gather around this Teacher and are trained by Him. Seekers after truth, not merely in the abstract, but as a life-force, come to Him and join the circle of those to whom He reveals these great secrets of all true life. Sitting at His feet, they learn from the

unfolding of His lessons the will and ways of God for them; and obeying each successive word, they realise within themselves the renewing force and uplifting power thereof. The true and perpetual condition of discipleship, and its ultimate issue, were clearly declared by the Lord Himself "to those Jews which believed on Him." "If ye abide in My word, then are ye truly My disciples; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John viii. 31, 32).

Before considering the glorious enduement the Teacher confers on every disciple, and the stern requirements that guard the entrance to discipleship, it is very important that we should have clearly outlined in our minds the true meaning of this phase of the relationship which Jesus bears to His people.

It is not that of a lecturer, from whose messages men may or may not deduce applications for themselves. It is not that of a prophet merely, making a divine pronouncement, and leaving the issues of the same. It certainly is not that of a specialist on a given subject, declaring his knowledge to the interest of a few, the amazement of more, and the bewilderment of most. It is none of these.

It is that of a Teacher—Himself possessing full

knowledge—bending over a pupil, and for a set purpose, with an end in view, imparting knowledge step by step, point by point, ever working on towards a definite end. That conception includes also the true ideal of our position. We are not casual listeners, neither are we merely interested hearers desiring information; we are disciples, looking towards and desiring the same end as the Master, and therefore listening to every word, marking every inflection of voice that carries meaning, and applying all our energy to realising the Teacher's purpose for us. Such is the ideal.

(ii.) Now let us consider the privileges that the Teacher confers upon those who become His disciples.

(1) The first is the establishment of those relations which make it possible for Him to teach and for us to be taught. The question of sin must be dealt with, and that which results from sin—our inability to understand the teaching. Christ never becomes a Teacher to those who are living in sin. Sin as actual transgression in the past must be pardoned, and sin as a principle of revolution within must be cleansed. So, before He unfolds one word of the divine law of life, or reveals in any particular the line of progress, He

deals with this twofold aspect of sin. To the soul judging past sin by confessing it and turning from it, He dispenses forgiveness, pronouncing His priestly absolution by virtue of His own atonement on the cross. To the soul yielded to Him absolutely and unreservedly, consenting to the death of self, He gives the blessing of cleansing from sin. This statement of His dealing with us is not intended to mark an order of procedure from pardon to cleansing. It is rather the declaration of the twofold aspect of the first work of Christ for His disciples, the bestowment of the initial blessing. In practical experience men constantly, though not invariably, and not necessarily, realise the first-named first in order. That is the result of the overwhelming and largely selfish desire for personal safety, a desire which is the natural and proper outcome of the divinely imparted instinct of self-preservation. Nevertheless they ought at once, for the higher reason of God's glory, to seek to realise the deeper side of the one blessing, that of cleansing. But His patience is manifested in our folly. He forgives and graciously waits. When we look at Him again, and say, "Master, there is more in Thy cross than pardon," then He makes us conscious of His power to cleanse. Certain it is that there

can be no real discipleship apart from the realisation of the twofold blessing. Beyond this there lies the dulness of our understanding, our inability to comprehend the truths He declares. This He overcomes by the gift of the Holy Spirit, who makes clear to us the teaching of the Master. What a priceless gift this is! The dullest natural intellect may be, and is, rendered keen and receptive Godwards, by the incoming of the Holy Spirit.

So He Himself provides for and creates the relationships of communion through cleansing, and intelligence through the indwelling of the Spirit, which constitute our condition for receiving what He has to teach.

(2) The other great privilege to be remembered is, that the school of Jesus is a technical school. He provides opportunities for us to prove in practical life the truths He has to declare. This is a great essential in His method, with which we shall deal more fully in a subsequent chapter. It is another evidence of His abounding grace, that the proving in technical details of the lessons He teaches is just as much under His personal guidance and direction as the truth in theory is received directly from Him.

(iii.) Now, upon what personal conditions may

I become a disciple? I fain would have this enduement of pardon, cleansing, and illumination. How may this be? No school of man was ever so strictly guarded, so select as this; yet none was ever so easy of access. No bar of race, or colour, or caste, or age stands across the entrance. Humanity constitutes the essential claim. And yet, because of the importance of the truths to be revealed, and of the necessity for the application of every power of the being to the understanding and realisation of these truths, Jesus stands at the entrance, forbidding any to enter, save upon certain conditions. Let us hear His threefold word. (a) "If any man cometh unto Me, and hateth not his own father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, *he cannot be My disciple*" (Luke xiv. 26). (b) "Whosoever doth not bear his own cross, and come after Me, *cannot be My disciple*" (Luke xiv. 27). (c) "Whosoever he be of you that renounceth not all that he hath, *he cannot be My disciple*" (Luke xiv. 33).

The new relationship must be superior, in the urgency of its claims, to the claim of any earthly relationship; it must be considered and answered before any claims of the self-life. The Teacher

demands that we take up the cross and so follow on, even though the progress be through pain. More — we must take the deep spiritual vow of poverty, renouncing all as possessions, counting every word He shall speak, and every truth He shall reveal, through whatsoever methods, as our chief and only wealth. In short, we must not be held, either by being possessed by others or possessing aught. There must be a clean severance from all entanglement, and an utter uncompromising abandonment of ourselves to Him. Unless this be so, we cannot be His disciples. If this be our attitude, then to us He gives pardon, cleansing, light; and so, becoming by relationship His disciples, and entering His school, we are ready for, and enter upon our course of instruction.

If these conditions seem hard and severe, let it be remembered what depends upon them. Character and destiny depend upon this question of discipleship. Not to impart information, and to satisfy curiosity, is Jesus the Teacher. It is because the truth sanctifies and makes free that He reveals it, and because, apart from the revelation He has to make, there is no possible way of realising God's great purposes for us. Compare Himself and His teaching with the

most sacred and beautiful of earth's loves and possessions, and these are unworthy of a moment's thought. They must all come from between Him and ourselves, that so we may know and do His will. Such attitude does not rob us of the enjoyment of all these things, so far as in themselves they are right. It rather adds to our joy.

Self renders it impossible to know Christ when other loves and interests intervene, and breeds dissatisfaction with all else, and makes that very self sad and weak. *Christ* absolute lights the whole being with His love and joy and beauty, and shines on other loves to their sanctification, and so the abnegation of self is self's highest development.

So let us enter the school of Jesus, and, receiving His gifts, await His teaching.

II

FIRST LESSONS

“Saviour and Master,
These sayings of Thine,
Help me to make them
Doings of mine ;
Words that like beams
Of humanity shine,
By them let me build up
The holy, divine.”—PAXTON HOOD.

THE Sermon on the Mount—as it is popularly styled, though the title always seems inadequate and poor—was delivered specially to the disciples. The first and second verses of the fifth chapter of Matthew very clearly declare this: “And seeing the multitudes, He went up into the mountain; and when He had sat down, His disciples came unto Him: and He opened His mouth and taught *them*, saying.” The multitude followed and gathered round this little group of Teacher and taught; but the teaching was for the disciples only—that is, for such as were brought into those necessary relations of which our first chapter spoke, and so could follow and in some measure

receive the wondrous words. In actual experience the teaching of this sermon is very far in advance even of this advanced age. Men have hardly begun to guess at the glory and beauty of this wonderful ideal, but in relation to the Teacher it is elementary and initial. All the wealth of His knowledge—knowledge that He is waiting to impart—lies beyond anything said here. Here He deals with the first ideals of true life, and reveals to men the divine purpose for them to-day. These are His *First Lessons*. Any exhaustive dealing with all the wonderful and delicate detail is impossible, and it is not indeed the purpose of this study. A general analysis of the whole, that we may catch its sweep and scope, and obtain an outline of the system, is what is possible and necessary. We shall now proceed to this consideration, noticing seven points of importance. This study should be taken with your Bible as your companion, tracing the teaching therein.

(i.) *Supremacy of Character* (Matt. v. 1-12).—The very first word that falls from His lips is a revelation of the will of God for man. "Blessed." "Happy." That is the divine thought and intention for us. Sorrow, tears, pain, disappointment—all these may be and are of inestimable value

in the Father's discipline; but they are means to an end, made necessary by man's sin. The end, in the purpose of God, is blessedness. Happiness is that after which all men in every age seek, and the first note in the Saviour's teaching reveals it as what God is seeking also. How then is it to be realised? This section contains the Master's answer. Men hold two views of what happiness consists in, viz., having, and doing. To possess much, or to do some great thing, constitutes the sum of human blessedness according to popular theory. Our Teacher sweeps these conceptions away by absolutely ignoring them. No "blessed" of His lights up for man either the "having" or "doing" of men. *Being* is everything. A man's happiness depends upon what he is in himself. These "blesseds" of Jesus touch human life in its lowliest phases, and reveal the highest possibilities even for such. Henceforth, for the disciples of Jesus themselves, and for a basis of their estimate of others, character is to be supreme. There is infinite tenderness in this on its positive side, and it is stern and inexorable on the negative. Such teaching will produce lives running contrary to all worldly estimate and custom, and discipleship will mean persecution; and so the Teacher adds a "blessed" for those who suffer through character.

(ii.) *Influence the Intention* (vers. 13-16).—This grows out of the former, and is at once the statement of a fact and the declaration of an intention. The fact is that character tells upon others. If a man live in the atmosphere of the beatitudes of Jesus, his life being of the character described, he will, apart from any effort along the line of actual work, exert certain influences. This is not only a fact, it is part of the divine intention. Salt savourless, light under a bushel, are worse than useless; this is, however, the statement of an impossible hypothesis. Salt savourless ceases to be salt. Light under a bushel goes out. This the Master intends us to understand, and hence the terrific force of His figures of speech.

These symbols mark for us distinctly the influence that the blessed life exerts. Salt is antiseptic, pungent, preventing the spread of corruption, and making that portion where health borders on disease, smart. Remember, absolute corruption never smarts. When men smart under the influence of the antiseptic life of righteousness it is a sign for which we should be thankful: conscience is not altogether dead, they are not "past feeling." The disciples, then, are to be salt, preventing corruption, and arousing the dormant sense of health. Light is here used, I think, in

its sense of guidance. Men are groping after God in this age with no light of their own by which to find Him. Your life is to be a light, by the aid of which men come to glorify God. Let no man whose life fails to be antiseptic, and never helps another Godward, imagine himself living within the circle of beatitudes.

(iii.) *The New Moral Code* (vers. 17-48).—Having thus seen the supremacy of character as the secret of happiness and the source of influence, we ask, What are the laws which govern the development of such character? The new code of ethics is startling. The Mosaic law of conduct was easy to obey when compared to this. The former is done away in the sense in which the less is included in the greater. Greater it surely is. Let this section be carefully read, remembering the following points:—(1) The righteousness of the disciples is to exceed that of the Pharisees as inner purity exceeds external whiteness. (2) Gifts on the altar do not expiate wrong-doing. (3) To look on sin with desire is sin; in other words, suppression of sin is still sin, because it recognises the presence of a principle antagonistic to God and excuses it. (4) Retaliation is forbidden, and love is to be the one law of relative life. No one can reverently study this ideal of life without

seeing the necessity for the fulfilling of the conditions of entrance to discipleship.

(iv.) *Self-Stricken* (vi.).—This chapter may, and undoubtedly does, contain very much teaching along other lines, but the underlying principle is that of self-abnegation. Note how the injunctions run counter to every popular idea of life:—(1) Alms are to be given privately, not blazoned abroad. (2) Prayer is pre-eminently a matter betwixt the soul and God; certainly not to be a means of advertising self's piety. (3) Men are still to fast, but with glad face, not "appearing" so to do, so that self is to have no glory for its denial of itself. (4) Wealth is not to be held save on trust. (5) Self is to be so smitten that anxiety concerning necessities cannot exist. Surely never were self-consideration and self-consciousness so smitten hip and thigh as here.

(v.) *Relative Charity* (vii. 1-5).—The consideration of my brother's fault is to drive me to self-examination rather than to the passing of judgment on him. I am ever to count my fault a beam and his a mote.

(vi.) *The Open Treasure-House* (vii. 7-14).—With what light and glory of tender love does this section come to us! Just as one's spirit is in danger of being overwhelmed with the sense of

the impossibility of realising such ideals. He reveals to us the wealth that lies at our disposal in the love and power of the Father, and in simplest and best understood words He reveals our privilege in that matter. "Ask." "Seek." "Knock." For daily help remember the acrostic here. Take the initial letters A. S. K, and reflect that the words for which they stand reveal the secret combination that admits us into the treasure-house of love, where there is stored for us all that we need for the realisation of the ideal.

(vii.) *Warning* (vii. 15-23).—What solemn words of warning are these! Siren voices will seek to lure us. No teaching but His can produce the true character. The truth of every message is to be tested by the life of the teacher, and if failure is found there we are to know him for "false," no matter how cleverly the sheep's clothing conceals the devouring wolf. How careful we need to be lest all should be marred by our being drawn aside by specious teaching which is contrary to His will!

These lessons are all initial, lying at the very foundation of all Christ has to teach men. In proportion as they are realised He is able to lead us forward to deeper truths. An English bishop said that this Sermon on the Mount could not be

applied to the State. Whatever the bishop intended, there is a side on which he was perfectly correct. These principles cannot be carried out in any State save where the Kingdom of Jesus is recognised, and men are His disciples. None save disciples can understand, much less obey His teaching. The crowds leaving the mountain were impressed with the authority of the teaching, but they were not captivated with its beauty, for all this was beyond their comprehension. Christianity did not come by force of arms, nor could it. Christianity will never come by Act of Parliament. The wisest of earth's scholars, and the most astute of her politicians, can lift no finger to help the kingdom of God, save by coming into the school of Jesus, and learning of Him by the inshining of the Holy Spirit. That lonely, labouring soul in back court, or isolated village, or far-off heathen hut, who is spelling out under the unique Teacher the lessons of this great deliverance, and so building character on these sayings of His, is doing more to realise on earth the kingdom of God, and so to bring the Golden Age, than all the company of diplomatists and politicians who are forgetful in all practical things of the Nazarene. To the learning of these first great lessons let us set ourselves with all submission of spirit and surrender of life.

III

THE METHOD OF ADVANCEMENT

"No matter how dull the scholar whom He
Takes into His school, and gives him to see;
A wonderful fashion of teaching He hath,
And wise to salvation He makes us through faith.
The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not stray,
His method so plain, so easy His way."

—CHARLES WESLEY.

THE subject of this paper is not intended to suggest the idea that all the First Lessons with which the last chapter dealt are to be realised to the full, and that not till then progress may be made beyond. The thought is rather that of advancement in those first great lessons. They contain a statement of the full possibilities of character in these days of probation, and therefore it would be impossible to go beyond them in this respect. At the same time, it must be remembered that Jesus said very much beyond this to His disciples, giving them to know and understand many of the things of God that had to do with their ultimate destiny and the divine purposes for the

race; and after all His teaching, at the last He had to leave them, saying, "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth." The teaching of the First Lessons is for the creation of that character to which the deeper things of God become intelligible, and advancement in the understanding and realisation of these, fits us for receiving and understanding whatever else may be beyond. The consideration of this paper includes both these things, though directed principally to the former. How, then, can we advance?

(i.) *Right Relationships with the Teacher must be maintained.*—Failure to understand this is perhaps one of the subtlest dangers to which the disciple is exposed. The idea is common that at some set time, through some special season of blessing, one enters into right relationships with Him, and that therefore, through all the coming days, these relationships abide. It is absolutely false. There is nothing in all the realms of life more delicate, more easy to interfere with than these relationships. As the most tremendous forces of which man knows anything are set in operation by simplest methods, and may be hindered by means equally

simple, so in relation to this greatest of all forces—the cleansing and illuminating force of contact with Jesus. By the simple method of cessation of activity I come into living contact with it, and by a moment's self-assertion I may hinder its working. Hence the need for living daily and hourly and every moment at the very place of beginnings, ever as a child depending upon Him, and ever as one of the weakest of those who love Him, abiding in Him.

It is a glorious thing to know that my cleansing and illumination depend upon Him, and that the whole of my responsibility in this matter is marked by my maintaining personal relationship with Him. This, however, is inexorable. Daily personal communion there must be, and the means of such, study of His Word, waiting upon Him in prayer, the cultivation of close fellowship by telling Him everything—joys as well as sorrows—and the periods of silence in which the soul simply waits and listens in the stillness for His voice—these cannot be neglected without a film, a veil, a cloud, a darkness coming between the soul and Himself, and so hindering the possibility of advancement.

All this specially needs emphasising in an age characterised by its rush and unrest, its loss of

the old spirit of meditation and quiet, a characterisation that applies to Christendom to-day, as evidenced by over-organisation, never ceasing rounds of societies, meetings, doings, and the lessening of the seasons of retirement and true worship. Personal relationship cannot be maintained in crowds. The Master and I alone must be a perpetual need, and for its realisation opportunity must be made.

(ii.) *The Truth taught must become Incarnate in the Disciples.*—As we insisted at the outset, discipleship is not a condition for amassing information. Every doctrine has its issue in some clearly defined duty; every theory taught reveals a practical application and responsibility. To the soul in right relationship with the Teacher, He reveals some new aspect of truth, and straightway there occurs some circumstance in which that doctrine may be tested by duty; and as we are most real in ordinary circumstances—our true selves appearing then, rather than in the heroic and extraordinary days of life—it is in the simple and commonplace experiences that these testing-places are mostly to be found.

All the circumstances and surroundings of the disciples are in the hands of the Supreme Lord who teaches, and these He manipulates and

arranges for the purpose of the advancement and development of His own. This is a great comfort. He knows the capacity and weakness and strength of every one in His school, and His examinations do not consist in a common testing for a common standard, and so are not competitive. They are rather individual, special care being taken with each one: and Peter will learn the supreme lesson of love with John, but the opportunity for manifesting it as a force in life will be separate and special in each case.

Now, advancement is dependent always on our obedience in these hours of testing, in our manifesting in actual practice the power of the truth we have heard in theory. No lesson is considered learned in the school of Jesus which is only committed to memory. That lesson only is learned which is incarnate in the life and becomes beautiful in its realisation and declaration in that way: and until this is so there can be no progress. "If any man willeth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching" (John vii. 17). This is so, because the teaching of Jesus is cumulative and progressive. To attempt to learn the lessons of to-morrow without knowledge of to-day's would be the utmost folly. Just as no boy can intelligently do a problem in Euclid until he knows the definitions

and accepts reasonably the axioms, and takes each successive step to the one in hand, so surely no disciple can possibly make progress in the truth of God, save as the first steps are taken. You cannot leave first principles and go on unto perfection, save as these first things have become principles and not merely theories.

Here we touch the secret of much of the failure in Christian living to-day. The powerlessness in service, the unattractiveness in life—what do they mean? Has the system of Jesus failed in these lives? Have the great lessons He came to teach humanity broken down in their application to human life? Take any single example—it may be that of your own experience. When you first became a disciple your days were days of delight and joy, the words and will of the Master thrilled and comforted you, and you walked in His ways with a joy and gladness that filled the days with song. The people you touched in daily life saw the beauty of Jesus in you. Gentle, long-suffering, strong, and pure, you incarnated His lessons, and your heart was glad, and other lives were influenced Godward. All has changed. Prayer is a duty. The Scriptures are dull and burdensome. You have no quick sense of the Lord's will. Your Christianity has become a restriction

through which you would like to break, an encumbrance of which you would fain be rid. These are confessions you never make, but they tell the true inner story of your life. Now what does this really mean? Just this. Somewhere back in the past you will find a day when the Teacher gave you some new vision of truth that straightway revealed an opportunity for you to know the glory of that truth in the pathway of obedience—something to be given up; something to be done; some word to be said. You paused, argued, disobeyed. No other lesson has been given nor can be. Every other depended upon that. That was not final—it was preparatory; and until that is learned by obedience there can be no advancement, and so for weeks, perchance months, aye, even years, you have been a disciple making no progress, and there is no wonder that you are weary of it all.

The Teacher's love is marked in your case by His fidelity to Himself and His own lessons. Time after time, in meetings, in conversations, in loneliness, He brings you back to that old point, and reiterates with a persistence and a patience passing all human understanding—"If any man willeth *to do* His will, he shall know of the teaching."

I have known all progress hindered for years because a letter was not written, and I saw the face of the disciple the day after that letter was despatched. The old light was restored, and the old joy returned as the great Teacher again began to reveal His will.

(iii.) *Advancement can only be within the Limit of Divine Purpose.*—While it is true that God has for an ultimate purpose some place of high service far on and out of sight, a glory and fruition beyond these days of learning and probation, a being and a doing for which all the teaching and discipline of to-day are preparing us, it is also true that, as part of His great progressive movement, He has an immediate purpose in every life, something for us to accomplish for Him here and now. It is to-day we are workers together with Him. There is no waste of time or material in the divine methods. Every step He takes us, every word He speaks to us, every testing He permits us, contributes something toward the development and progress of all. Joseph sold into slavery, David exiled from his kingdom, Job crouching under the whirlwind, Paul bearing the buffeting of Satan's messenger—all are examples. These experiences were dark and mysterious for the time, and while they

formed part of the individual training of these men, they were also in each case a necessary part of the divine dealing with the larger circle. At the time the principal consciousness was that of limitation, and consequent longing for larger revelation; but at last they all came to understand that, for the sake of others, they suffered and bore, and that was to them more than compensation for all the restriction and waiting. There are many things we know not now, because the greater issues would be hindered by our knowing. So what is best the Teacher holds in reserve, that we may moment by moment bear our share in this march of God to ultimate triumph and light.

This section of our study is a most solemn one. So many disciples in name have ceased to be taught of Jesus, and we are all in such perpetual danger of slipping out of the real circle of discipleship, that we ought to ask ourselves the questions suggested by these three points on the subject of advancement. These questions should be asked regularly, and always in the hour of loneliness with the Master.

(1) Am I in right relationship with the Teacher to-day? Do I still live at the cross, and know the power of its cleansing moment by moment,

and so am I walking in the light, without which all the words of Jesus are dark sayings, and His testings crosses, burdens out of which I can only gather reasons for murmuring?

(2) If I am not in this place of maintained fellowship, when did I depart therefrom? What word of His have I disobeyed? To that point let me return, whether it be but an hour ago or years, and there let me absolutely surrender, at whatever cost, and do what He requires, however small, or however irksome it appears to be.

(3) Am I content to wait when His voice does not speak—and I cannot find the reason in myself—until He has accomplished His present purpose in me, even though I understand it not just now?

With matchless patience and pity, and tender love beyond all attempts at explanation, this Teacher waits, and stoops, and woos us, and ever for our highest good and deepest peace. Let us then, by consecrated watching, maintain the attitude of advancement, and so, line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, as we are able to bear, He will lead us on, until we come to the perfect light, and life, and love of God.

IV

THE DISCIPLE AT HOME

"Thus is it with the homely life around—
There hidden, Christ abides;
Still by the single eye for ever found
That seeketh none besides.

Where hewn and shaped till self no more is found,
Self ended at Thy cross;
The precious freed from all the vile around,
No gain, but blessed loss.

Then Christ alone remains—the former things
For ever passed away;
And unto Him the heart in gladness sings
All through the weary day."—H. SUSO.

So far we have considered the great essential facts of discipleship. There is a sense in which we hold most tenaciously that view of Christianity which is spoken of to-day as "other-worldly." Man's destiny lies beyond this life of probation, and towards that great issue the Master is ever working as He teaches us the lessons of His love. Yet it has ever been the glory of Christianity that it is intensely practical, touching the present life at every point with healing and beauty,

sweetening all the streams by purifying the sources. In this and the following papers it will be ours to trace the effect of discipleship on the common relationships of life.

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We begin, then, with Home, because of its paramount importance. Perhaps there is no side of life more in danger of being neglected in this busy, many-sided age, than that of home; and certainly there is no side which we can less afford to neglect. No service for God is of any value which is contradicted by the life at home; neither have we any right to neglect home on the plea of multiplied engagements outside.

The home of the disciple may be conducive to progress in grace, or it may be quite the reverse, and of course the duty will vary accordingly.

Let us first look at the great ideal of the Christian home presented in the New Testament, and then make particular application of the same.

(i.) To the follower of Jesus Christ there are certain central and unalterable facts which will touch and influence all the home relationships. Let us look first at these.

(1) The New Authority stands in the forefront. The Teacher has claimed an absolute

and unvarying supremacy over the life. That initial condition of discipleship now enters into every question, and from it there can be no deviation—no, not for a single moment. This authority is one that will set up the ideals of life, and declare the standard of action in all the larger and more important matters of the days, and in the most simple and trifling details of the passing moments. This authority becomes the gauge and measure of all other government. The rightness or otherwise of any rule of life imposed on the disciple by any other person is to be tested by the will of the Master. So my obligation to any person as a disciple is limited or enforced by my supreme obligation to Jesus. Responsibility to Him is higher than that of wife to husband, or child to parents, or servant to master. These are all relationships of His approving, but His claim is first, and if any of these clash with that, they are to be sacrificed, this to abide.

(2) Then comes the New Attitude created towards others. The relationship of the disciple to Christ, as we have seen, is that of life. Now, this life is the life of Christ, and what it is in itself must now become the governing force, and so give new character to my feeling and acting towards others.

His life is love. That life, regnant in me, creates the disposition of love towards all. The old scheme of life was that of a pre-eminent sense of the importance of self, and all other interests were made subservient to that, and all other persons loved or disliked as they ministered to or interfered with that. Now, love governing, each will "esteem other better than himself," and the need of the outsider will become the touchstone of life. The light of Christ's presence will reveal the shortcomings of myself, and the hitherto unrecognised excellences of others. So the attitude of the disciple will become like that of his Lord—the attitude of one who waits not to be ministered unto, but to minister; and the bearing of the cup of cold water to the thirsty will be the delight of all the days, opportunities for which will not be waited for but sought.

Out of these essential considerations there grows a new sense altogether of what home really is. It is to be the first, and perhaps the most simple and beautiful manifestation of the authority of Jesus. Every member of the home, recognising that supreme Kingship, will find their relationship towards each other ennobled and purified as they live in the great realm of His love: each willing to sink personal aims for the sake of the

realisation of the highest good of all; no one desiring to gratify any part of their own desire at the expense of another; self-abnegation, the individual law that realises the general peace and restfulness, makes home at its highest and best. So the manifestation of the beauty of the kingdom of Jesus in realisation of His beatitudes in the home being the supreme desire of each and all, personal blessedness is also realised, and every sacred tie of home becomes in itself more delightful and satisfying, for Christ's mission amongst His disciples is ever the fulfilling, and never the destruction of all high and noble ideals. The real music and beauty of home are only known to those who are simple and faithful disciples of Jesus.

(3) What a glorious picture is presented of a true home in the writings of the Apostle Paul! Himself a man who for the highest reasons never perhaps knew the joy of such life, he nevertheless understood its beauty; and if you will take the different words he writes in his Epistles as to the true position and duty of husband, wife, parent, child, master, servant, you will see the vision of the perfect home life. At the principal points let us look.

(a) Take first the husband and wife in their

relation to each other, and as parents towards their children. What more wonderful ideal than this can there be? "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it." That is true love—absolute self-abnegation, the one overmastering passion being that of the highest good and greatest happiness of the wife. How impossible in such love, the thousand little neglects which mar the life of women, and render them heavy with disappointed hope! How far more impossible the selfish brutality that too often has made home infinitely more like hell than heaven! Again, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord." That can only be obeyed when the husband is loving with the Lord's love. When that is so, see how beautifully there is recognised here the true view of woman's love, as that which finds its highest manifestation in submission. Then the revelation of Paul's writings concerning the relation of parents to children is a remarkable one, and sorely needs restating in these days. It is that of the father's responsibility. It is he who is to train them; and see how tenderly this is to be, not by the methods that will provoke anger, but in "nurture and admonition of the Lord."

(b) Then the position of the child, simply marked by that one thought of obedience. What a glorious and tender thought it is! It implies an authority provided, which frees the tender life from the responsibility of thinking and planning, and provides that it shall make advancement towards perfection within the realm of a very definite and direct government. How grand a provision that is, perhaps we never fully realise until we have passed beyond it; and amid the strife of life, with its oft-recurring crises, when we are sore bewildered as to which path we ought to take, we long for the days of childhood again, when we could ask father, mother, and when in obeying them, we knew we were doing that which pleased the Lord. That view of obedience as the Lord's tender provision for their safety and development should ever be presented to our dear disciple-children. What a responsibility it entails upon us parents that we seek our laws for them from the King!

(c) Then there is the presence in the home of those who help and serve. The position of these is made very sacred in the school of Jesus. Most distinctly is it laid down that they can do "all things" as unto the Lord, and that expression includes and lights up the most trivial

duties that they are called upon to render. It is of such that the wonderful possibility is declared, that they may "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour." How beautiful is the life of some, we know full well. Towards them the Christian master is to exercise the patience of his Master towards himself, making demands on eager, loving service, not by threatening, but by loving Christly recognition of the holiness of their service and its value to the Lord Himself.

(ii.) This is a glorious picture. No such ideal of home has ever been presented to the world. It has been realised in a large measure over and over again. No truer fore-glimpse of the heavenlies can be found than that of the Christian home, with all its deep love, quiet peace, and constant brightness and merriment. Discipleship has often to be maintained in very different home surroundings. The husband, wife, parent, child, servant, may either of them be the only disciple, and their relationship to Christ looked upon with pity, contempt, or even open opposition. The position of such is a very difficult one; but for this, as for all other circumstances, the grace and power of Christ are sufficient. When this is so, there is a twofold responsibility resting upon the Christian.

(1) Remembering the great ideals, there must be a realisation of the Master's will for the individual case. The Christ-life of love must govern and manifest itself towards others, even though there be no return on the part of the dearest earthly friends.

(2) Then, if that manifestation bring contempt and persecution, there is to be an absence of the revengeful spirit, and the presence of loving patience, that so the unbelieving may be won by the behaviour of the believing.

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The creation of true Christian homes is the splendid possibility of young discipleship. The question of marriage lies at the base of this. Unequal yoking together of the disciples of Jesus with unbelievers is one of the most disastrous matters for the Church and the world; and there should be no alliance of life, even between believers, unless the Lord's will be so clearly revealed that there can be no mistaking it.

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The ideal Christian home will ever have a door open to welcome the homeless ones of our great centres of population, that its atmosphere of love may help to guard and form the life of such.

V

THE DISCIPLE AT BUSINESS

“Yea! we know that Thou rejoicest
O'er each work of Thine;
Thou didst ears and hands and voices
For Thy praise design;
Craftsman's art and music's measure
For Thy pleasure
All combine.”—F. POTT.

THERE is no more common mistake, or more dangerous, than that work is in some way connected with the curse. Man was created for work. It is one of the very first laws of his being. Unemployed man is a contravention of the divine purpose. Hence, before man fell, we see him, in all the strength of his perfect being, at work. “And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it” (Gen. ii. 15). Sin brought weariness and disappointment, which made work a burden, but work itself is a divine arrangement for the gladdening of life.

This law abides under the Christian dispensa-

tion. No word Christ spoke can be construed into a word revoking it. It is rather taken up and enforced by Christ Himself and the apostles. In the Sermon on the Mount the Lord recognises the power to work as a special gift which raises us above the level of birds and flowers. Of the fowls He said, "Are not ye of much more value than they?" (Matt. vi. 26): and of the flowers, "If God doth so clothe the grass . . . shall He not much more clothe you?" (vi. 30). In each case the teaching is not that we should neither "sow" nor "reap," and neither "toil" nor "spin," but that, having these powers and using them, how much more likely it is that our need should be supplied, rather than that of fowls or flowers! The philosophy of the situation is, that Christ recognises all gifts and callings as from God, and looks upon them as the channels through which God will supply our need. Paul is most clear in his exposition of the will of God in these matters. In writing to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. iii. 10) he makes working the condition of eating; and in writing to the Ephesians (iv. 28) he places working in antithesis to stealing, and reveals the larger social responsibility when he says that a man is to work, not merely for his own support, but

“that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need;” and in his first letter to Timothy (v. 8) he declares that, “if any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is *worse than an unbeliever.*”

Recognising the great truth of the solidarity of humanity, that each person is part of the whole, that the whole is incomplete in the incompleteness of any, it is evident that all the great and increasing needs of humanity for this life are provided for by God in the gifts He has bestowed, to every man severally as He will, His will ever being the well-being and happiness of the creature. Every ability to do something which will be for the support of the worker, and at the same time contribute to the legitimate needs of others, is a divine gift, a divine calling. Capacity for brain work, dexterity of fingers, are each, and in every variety of application, divinely bestowed. To dig—whether with spade, or plough, or shaft and machinery for metals—is a calling of God. To construct with wood, or stone, or iron, for permanence or locomotion, is a divine gift. To see a vision and paint it, to hear music and translate it, to catch glimpses of truth and

embody them in form poetic—these and all the thousands of various gifts bestowed upon men are *of God*. On every individual some gift is bestowed, save perchance upon those who, in these days of humanity's sin and sorrow, are from their birth limited in their powers. Not only the preacher, but every man, has a calling of God; and the duty of each man to God, to the community, to himself, is to find that calling, and therein to abide (see 1 Cor. vii. 20-24).

This is the great divine ideal from which humanity has wandered, to its sorrow, shame, and undoing; and as discipleship means a return to divine ideals through the teaching and power of Jesus, we must now apply these principles to the disciple as he or she enters business.

(i.) The first serious question, then, for the disciple is, "What is the gift bestowed upon me, the calling of God for me?" The answer to that is to be found within, rather than without. A gift ever means fitness. To every man God intends to make watches, He has given the necessary fineness of touch and nerve patience. To every woman He designs to teach, He has given the attractive force and lucid gift that fits her to hold and teach the children. Discipleship

means facility for discovering the gift of God. The trouble is, that so many have thought that when we begin to touch these things our Teacher is uninterested, and so we have made the greatest blunders of our lives in choosing our occupation, rather than setting ourselves to discover the divine calling. To the young disciple who reads this article, and who has not yet decided on life's work, let me say, in all simplicity and confidence: Seek to find your right place in life by telling your Lord your sense of need, and asking for His direction.

In this matter an enormous responsibility rests upon parents, that they seek to discover the Lord's purpose for their boys and girls, and then train them for that position. This can only be done by patient watching for the manifestation of the God-bestowed powers of each life separately, and *this cannot be, when in tender years we send our children out of our homes to live, and so transfer our responsibility to others than those by God appointed.*

(ii.) The gift being discovered, now follows the necessity for persistent application for the most perfect development thereof. The disciple of Jesus, recognising his calling in life as of God, cannot possibly treat it carelessly or with any

measure of indifference. Every power of the will must be brought to bear on the application of the mind to the mastery of the subject in hand. A Christian carpenter will master the use of every tool, and lay himself out to embody in his work the very spirit of the Christ. A Christian doctor will leave no department of the great science neglected, or will devote himself with perfect consecration to that department for which God has given him the gift of a specialist. The great advantage of discipleship is to be found in the fact that, if I recognise my calling as a divine one, then I am sure that He who bestowed the gift understands it, and all my personal application to its mastery will be in the spirit of dependent prayer. Christian mechanics, tradesmen, professional men, should be the finest in the world, and would be if they lived in the power of their relationship to Christ.

(iii.) Fully equipped for qualified service, the disciple now faces the sterner work of the years, and under the present conditions of life this is mostly done as the servant of others. Again, referring to Paul's words in 1 Cor. vii. 22-24, we see how that the disciple is to consider his higher relationship to God. He is "the Lord's free man," and is "to abide with God" in his

calling. Now, how does that affect his work? It lights it up with the glory of the divine goodwill to men, so that each piece of work becomes a part of the divine contribution to the need of the community; and if I measure cloth, or sell groceries, or paint a picture, or play an instrument, or set a limb, or anything that is an exercise of a divine gift, I do it, not as a means of livelihood first, but as part of God's work, and so I become, down to the smallest detail of everyday life, "a worker together with Him." Hold but that view of life's work, and there can be no more "scamping" of work—*no, not even to be in time for a prayer-meeting.*

How does abiding with God in my calling affect my relation to my employer? It makes me treat him as though he were in my place and I in his. Hear the Teacher's own words: "All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them" (Matt. vii. 12). To that nothing can be added.

(iv.) Finally, the disciple in business on his own account lives and acts within certain very clearly defined principles. He ever remembers that he is a steward of his Master. He possesses nothing, but holds on trust all he has, and is responsible to Christ for the way he gets, the way he uses, and

the measure of his getting or holding. No disciple of Jesus can amass a fortune simply for the sake of possession. He may be prosperous in his undertakings, but his prosperity must ever mean increased opportunity for divine service. No disciple can oppress the hireling in his wages. That wage should be, not merely the measure of keeping his servant's body and soul together, it should include provision for the culture of all that his being demands. A "living wage," in the common acceptation of that term, is not the measure for a Christian paymaster.

A Christian cannot consent to enrich himself by taking advantage of the downfall or misfortune of another man. That man who strikes a bargain to his own profit which takes advantage of some pressing need on the part of another is none of Christ's. No Christian can take part in the monopolies of the day, which have as the very basis of their operations the enrichment of the few to the detriment of the many. There is nothing perhaps more devilish in commercial life to-day than the great monopolies. America is cursed by them, and England is threatened. No disciple of Christ can touch them and abide in the teaching of Jesus. The twofold law of life enunciated by our Teacher will purify commerce throughout, and nothing

short of that will ever do it. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Matt. xxii. 37, 39).

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These are said to be impossible ideals for business life to-day. We reply that the very essence and genius of discipleship is the realisation of the impossible. It is just because the Church of Jesus Christ has stood in the presence of His teaching and said "impossible" that she has become so weak and forceless in all the affairs of this busy age. Let us have a few men and women again who, like the early disciples in Pentecostal days, believe in Jesus and in the eternal wisdom of all His teaching, and who are prepared to suffer the loss of all things rather than disobey, and the potency and possibility of His ideals will begin to dawn on the world again as in those days, breaking up dynasties, revolutionising empires, and turning the world upside down.

Nowhere is such work more needed than in the realm of commerce, and nowhere can we make better investment for the Master's kingdom to-day than by purifying rigidly that corner of the great realm which we touch.

Let every disciple find his gift from God, cultivate it for God, exercise it abiding in God, and he will not only secure his own highest success, but will contribute his quota to the preparatory work of this dispensation, for the coming of the King, and the establishment of His kingdom on earth.

VI

THE DISCIPLE AT PLAY

"In that new childhood of the earth
Life of itself shall dance and play,
Fresh blood in Time's shrank veins make mirth,
And labour meet delight half way."

—J. RUSSELL LOWELL.

So far there has seemed to be no contradiction of terms in the subjects which have come under our consideration. Among all sections of Christians there would be a consensus of opinion as to the rightness of considering "The Disciple at Home" and "The Disciple at Business." I do not anticipate any conflict of opinion concerning any subsequent division of this subject. I can, however, imagine that there may be a doubt in the mind of some with regard to the title at the head of this chapter; and yet it is of such enormous importance that to omit it were not only to render the study incomplete, but to do positive injustice to the follower of Christ who, upon this of all subjects, is feeling his or her need of direct and

wholesome teaching. The fact that large numbers of young people lose their spirituality here is due, not to the inconsistency of play, but rather to lack of clear teaching, and therefore of failure to understand the true position of the child of God in reference thereto. Let us apply ourselves to a twofold consideration—firstly, as to the fact of play in the life of discipleship, and then to the limits which are marked off for those who are learning of Christ in this as in all matters.

(i.) The very first truth to be understood and kept in mind is that of the purpose of Christ in the present probationary stage of human life. I have already emphasised the fact that the Master is preparing us for an end which is beyond the present life altogether. By that I abide. It must, however, be remembered that, while in Christ I gain more blessings than my fathers lost, the very first business of the great scheme of redemption and instruction is the restoration of man to the divine ideal of human life here. The man who most truly manifests the beauties of human life in all its bearings, most truly proves his progress towards and preparation for the glory that has not yet been revealed. A human being developed on one side of his nature, to the damage or contraction of another, is by so much thwart-

ing a divine purpose, damaging a divine ideal. This we readily admit in some cases—such, for instance, as the development of flesh to the injury of spirit. It is true of a man who loses his power for stern work in his abandonment to play. It is equally true of a man who cannot play because his power to do so has become deadened by unceasing toil. The power to laugh, to cease work, and frolic in forgetfulness of all the conflict, to make merry, is a divine bestowment upon man, and its absence in any case is as sure a mark of the blighting effects of sin as is the frothy life of the devotee of miscalled pleasure who never contributes anything to the work of his generation. This power is based upon the wisdom of God, and His knowledge of the needs of the creatures of His hand. To this all scientific statement bears witness. Every medical man knows the enormous value of prescribing change, exercise, cessation of toil, and pure amusement, in order that there may be better work, harder blows, more clear thinking, and that the sum total of the life may be of a higher order: and what is true medical science, but a discovery of the laws of God for the wellbeing of the creatures of His love? Now Jesus did not come to contradict or set aside any great law of human life, and

most certainly not that which thus provides for the highest development of man. He has come to interfere here, as everywhere else, and to restore play to its proper place in every life; and though He gave His followers no set of rules, He has given them in His teaching great principles, which will adjust these matters as perfectly as all others.

Before turning to consider them, let me state with perfect clearness, that especially in this age of ceaseless activity, which is over and over again more worldly than godly, and in the whirl and rush of which every man, whether he be a Christian or no, is necessarily caught up and carried forward, it is an absolute necessity, and therefore a solemn duty, that the follower of Christ should learn how to play within proper limits, that so he may be the stronger man for the stress of the age, and to confront its rush, and restlessness, and weakness with his testimony to the peace, and quietness, and tremendous force, of the life possessed by, and matured in God. Perhaps I may put this most forcefully by a personal illustration. I find no final preparation for the delivery of the messages of God on Sunday—messages for which I must first solemnly have sought, not only by prayer, but also by stern application to study and

thought—equal to a Saturday afternoon in company with some fellow-disciple, with my bag of clubs, “driving” a golf ball over, and sometimes into “bunkers,” “teeing up” and “holing out;” and I can stride over the grass and through the heather and sand, singing with perfect sincerity—

“I feel like singing all the time;
My tears are wiped away;
For Jesus is a friend of mine:
I’ll serve Him every day.”

(ii.) Now as to the limits of play for the disciple. They are found, by natural sequence, in that condition of life in which I never for a moment forget that I am Christ’s, and my loyalty to Him is unquestioning and constant. How will that one great principle affect my play? In two ways: firstly, in the realm of my personal realisation of His purpose for me, and, secondly, in my relationship with Him for the accomplishment of His purpose in all those with whom I come in contact.

(1) As we have seen, the purpose of Jesus is the perfecting of my being. It follows, therefore, most clearly that my play must ever be *recreative* in character, and never *destructive*. Further, the complexity of human life must be considered. Man is neither body, soul, nor spirit separately.

He is body, soul, and spirit, and between these different sides of his complex nature there is the closest and most subtle inter-relation, so that I cannot possibly do injury to either side without injuring myself as a whole. To destroy my physical power is to weaken my mental, and that is for to-day, at any rate, to limit the opportunity for the culture of the spiritual. Any form of play, then, that injures my physical powers, or dwarfs my mental vigour, or takes away my spiritual sense, is impossible for me as a disciple of Christ. That play, and only that, which recreates, and so fits for larger service, is legitimate.

(2) Then, further, I cannot in the power of the Christ-life live only for myself. I am not to seek recreation by any means which involves injury to my fellow-being, even though the doing thereof may seem to be of direct benefit to me. Let me not be misunderstood. I do *not* say that, because one man abuses lawn-tennis by waste of time thereat, I am not to play. I *do* say that if I see lawn-tennis has such a fascination for a friend of mine as to make him liable to neglect his sterner work, I am to be "narrow" enough to refuse to play with him, unless he is playing upon the very conditions which make for his development only,

as I play upon for mine. The relative law is that I only have fellowship, even in play, with a fellow-being upon the principles which are highest and best for him, and never upon what he sets up for himself, if they are lower than the highest. Neither can I consent to be amused in any form by that which is debasing the life of those who amuse me. I have purposely avoided naming any forms of play, save those that would be looked upon as legitimate in proper time and place by almost every Christian. This avoidance has been due to the fact that I very strongly desire in this, as in every detail of life, to throw the disciple upon the Master for direct guidance, and this because I am persuaded there is no other safe course, because there is no other unfailing and infallible authority. Jesus makes a speciality of every individuality, and He alone can do this. That which may be perfectly lawful and right for me may be a sin to my brother, and that which I dare not do at the risk of losing my spiritual force, he may find conducive to his highest advancement. Let each one seek the Lord's direct pleasure, and be true to that, and there can be no mistake; but by following human examples, or making others the standard of what one may or may not do, one will be constantly liable to get

into places of positive danger. These principles in application will be found most drastic, and yet will bring us into the air of perfect liberty. There are some forms of worldly amusement debasing and injurious in themselves, and some which are procured at the cost of the degradation and ruin of others. Against all these the disciple by word and life should be a constant protest. One of the surest ways to combat them, is to manifest in our lives the joyousness of discipleship, and that, in our power to play purely and perfectly, as surely in the light of the divine love as when we pray or preach.

VII

THE DISCIPLE AS A FRIEND

"I would joy in your joy : let me have a friend's part
In the warmth of your welcome of hand and of heart,—
On your playground of boyhood unbend the brow's care,
And shift the old burdens our shoulders must bear."

—J. G. WHITTIER.

Of all the words in our language which have been undergoing change of meaning, perhaps none have been more abused than this word "friend." Having as its root idea the thought of love—for it is really the present participle of the old Anglo-Saxon verb "freon," to love—it marked in old time the close union of two persons, other than relatives, in the bonds of sincere love for each other—love that made each care for and desire to serve the other better than himself. It is now used too often in a loose way. A man is my friend to-day if he be but a passing acquaintance, or if we are on speaking terms. I want to write of the disciple as a friend in the older sense of comradeship—close heart-companionship. The

word is a Bible word, and comes by translation both from the Hebrew and the Greek, from words conveying this thought. The Hebrew word translated friend signifies an associate, and comes from the root "to pasture." So a friend is one of the flock, feeding together, sharing the very sustenance of life. The Greek word is the word "lover," and so is in perfect harmony with the thought of the English word used for its translation.

Man, by virtue of his humanity, all the world over, seeks for friendship. The life of the hermit, the recluse, is abnormal. It is contrary to the very genius of human nature for a man to live alone. This desire for friendship grows out of the deepest necessity of his nature, he being created for others as well as for himself. Sympathy, love, service, are the very essentials of human nature at its best, and these demand an object. So, in the largest and most general sense, man is not intended to be alone. Coming into a closer consideration of this great law, we find among men this farther necessity for personal friendship. Every man could not be a close companion of every other. We have to do with the selective law of affinity. That is the subtle, almost undefinable somewhat, which draws two people together in a brotherhood, sometimes closer than

the brotherhood of blood. We say undefinable, because it is often difficult to know why two particular persons are such friends. Affinity may mean conformity, agreement, resemblance; it is also the union of bodies of a dissimilar nature in one harmonious whole. This law of personal friendship has held in all time. David and Jonathan have had their forerunners and successors throughout the generations of human kind. Now in this, as in all other matters, Christ comes to fulfil, and not to destroy. He sent His disciples out two by two, as I believe, on a recognition of this great necessity in human life, and to this time, in all Christian service and Christian living, the strength and joy of a strong personal friendship is almost beyond computation.

(i.) Facing the disciple in this matter of friendship is a great limitation. He cannot enter into any close bond, save with those who are, like himself, submitted to Jesus Christ. This is the highest law of all to him, and nothing that can possibly interfere with his relation to his Lord must be tolerated for a moment. The claim itself looks hard and arbitrary, but the infinite wisdom and love thereof has been evidenced by the sad results accruing to those who have disregarded it, and have formed friendships with

the world which have proved to be enmity against God. The reason is perfectly clear to those who have a true conception of what discipleship really is, and how radically it differs from all other life.

(ii.) Remembering this, now for a moment consider how discipleship is in itself a perfect qualification for the highest form of friendship. Given two disciples of Jesus, drawn towards each other by the natural law of affinity, and see how His work in them fits them for a friendship of the strongest and most lasting kind.

(1) There is the self-denial which He has enjoined upon them as the way of entrance upon discipleship, and the condition of its continuity. If self be smitten to the death, the one most prolific source of dissension and the breaking up of friendship has gone. With what strength we can love and serve if we have lost our hold on self, with all its unceasing demands.

(2) Then the common consecration of the life to the Kingship of Jesus. Two people, loving each other, and each able to say, "That life which I now live in the flesh, I live in faith" (Gal. ii. 20), have the will and the impulse of one, and that one, in way and work, is ever love.

(3) Then, yet further, there is communion of interest. It is written of the hosts that gathered

to Hebron, that they were of "one heart to make David king." That common cause made a people, a nation solid and strong. So with friendship in Jesus. The disciple has nothing to live for but by word, and deed, and prayer to bring on the day of his Lord's crowning; and when two of these are brought into comradeship by natural law, and their friendship becomes hot with the common fervour of a great purpose such as this, how strong and lasting must such friendship be!

(iii.) Remembering the limitation and qualifications of friendship, let us now proceed to consider the friendship of disciples in itself. Each will cherish for the other a very high ideal of life, character, and service—no less than the will of God in each. The prayer of Epaphras for the Colossian Christians, "that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God" (Col. iv. 12), is a delightful statement of the desire that disciple-comrades ever cherish for each other, and the friendship is ever looked upon as a means to that end. So the very heart of the golden rule is reached in such friendship, for each does to the other what he would the other should do to him. When this is so, there comes that delightful sense of rest and naturalness in each other's company which is the very essence of friendship.

Some years ago a friend gave me a quotation which I copied into my commonplace book. It was from Mrs. Craik's "Life for a Life," and I give it here as very beautifully expressing that thought. "Oh, the comfort, the inexpressible comfort of feeling safe with a person, having neither to weigh thoughts nor measure words, but pour them all right out just as they are, chaff and grain together, knowing that a faithful hand will take and sift them, keep what is worth keeping, and then with the breath of kindness blow the rest away!"

That is the abiding condition of friends of Jesus. All necessity for reserve and hiding is gone, in the absolute confidence born of the certainty of high unselfish love. This laying bare of each to each produces the true vision of each to each. I shall thus be able to recognise quickly all the excellences in the character of my friend which perchance other persons may be slow to discover. He will see with clearest vision the points of my shortcoming and failure. Love is never blind, and we shall know each other more deeply and truly in that life of mutual love than it is possible for man to know man by careful calculation or closest critical observation. It has been said that "love will stand at the door and knock long after

self-conscious dignity has fallen asleep," which is only another way of expressing Paul's great word, "Love suffereth long and is kind"; and because this is true the clear vision of friendship ever makes demands on eager, consecrated service. The good recognised will be developed by fellowship, and, where that good is costing my friend much sacrifice and suffering, by encouragement and fidelity. The shortcoming will be matter concerning which the friend will mourn and pray in secret, and of which he will speak in such tones of tender love that his brother will be won to the higher surrender, which ever means victory and advancement. So together, and by the reciprocity of this holy comradeship, there will be a building of each other up, and a several growth in grace.

There is no higher or more wonderful description of the possibilities of true friendship in Jesus than that contained in Paul's words to the Romans (xii. 15), "Rejoice with them that rejoice; weep with them that weep." That is true sympathy, and perfect sympathy between two is friendship. The word "sympathy" has too long been robbed of its glory by the narrowing interpretation which has considered it only as the power "to weep with them that weep." That is the smaller and easier part of true sympathy.

Sympathy is the power that projects life outside the circle of personality and shares the life of another, feeling the thrill of the other's joy and the pain of the other's woe. That can only be realised when the friendship is in Jesus. There it can be and is. Is my friend in trouble, in difficulty, in temptation? I am his companion still, and the sorrow, the perplexity, the anguish are mine also. Leave him now he has fallen? Impossible. When he fell I fell, and I shall not feel erect again until he has made even that fall a "stepping-stone to higher things." Is my friend in joy, in prosperity, in victory? I am yet with him; and the rapture, the success, the triumph are mine because they are his. Be jealous of his promotion? Again impossible. If he rises, so do I; and all his advancement is my greatest progress, for we are one.

Blessed is the man that hath such a friend. It is impossible to have many. I do not believe that it is the divine ideal that we should. It is questionable whether any person, apart from the higher realm of relationship, ever has more than one. Such friendship cannot be separated. Oceans and continents may divide. The mutual love laughs at these, and in daily service, prayer, and meditation each is still with the other, and thinks,

and plans, and works under the old influences. This friendship knows nothing of conventionality's little axioms, but abides in the great realm of love, and does things strange to the outside beholder. Such friendship cannot be broken. Death is but a pause, wherein the one hears from the great silence the old voice, and feels drawing him thither the old love; and the other waits in the splendours of that silence, with the Lord, for the coming of the fellow, whose song will add to heaven's music. Friendship is always beautiful; but the friendship of disciples, based upon the law of affinity, and conditioned and consummated in Christ, is peerless.

VIII

THE DISCIPLE AT WORK FOR THE MASTER

"Thou shalt tell Me in the glory
All that thou hast done,
Setting forth alone : returning
Not alone.

Thou shalt bring the ransomed with thee ;
They with songs shall come
As the golden sheaves of harvest
Gathered home."—T. P.

THIS is pre-eminently the "fussy" age. Every one must be doing something. Nothing more clearly reveals the spirit of the age than the contrast between the attitude of the thought of men towards work now, and, say, fifty years ago. Then the busiest endeavoured to make it appear that they did nothing. To-day the laziest are most eager for their friends to think of them as overworked. Personally, taking the largest outlook, I think this is a decided improvement, for it is an approximation to the Pauline ideal that a man must work or starve. It has touched the

Church, however, and *there* has wrought a great deal of mischief, if some good. There never was such a day of organisations, and meetings, and societies. Why, the alphabet is nearly exhausted in giving signs that stand for societies. We preachers are in danger of bewilderment as we give out notices concerning Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., I.B.R.A., P.S.A., P.M.E., Y.P.S.C.E., S.S.U., and so on. Now, let no unkind word be said of any branch of service. All the honest and consecrated work represented by these very letters I have quoted we welcome with delight and thank God for. Yet this very multiplication of work has in it an element of danger, and one of the perilous sides to it, has been the setting of unsanctified and even unconverted persons to work. Side by side with this demand for workers has come a rebound from that view of a "vocation" which culminated in priestism, and the fitness of a caste only for holy service. As is so often the case, the rebound has gone beyond proper limits. We have *rightly* contended for the rights of all believers to familiarity with the things of God, and freedom to serve. We have *wrongly* extended to those outside the discipleship, the opportunity of helping in the work of the Master. This has been to

their detriment, giving them a sense of security to which they had no right, and it has also been to the serious injury of the work itself. We must return to first principles. Personal relation to Christ, is vocation for service. Apart from it there can be none. On that occasion when the crowds, having come by sea to Capernaum "seeking Jesus," asked Him, "What must we do that we may work the works of God?" He said, "This is the work of God—that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent" (John vi. 24-29). Of that saying Dr. Westcott writes: "This simple formula contains the complete solution of the relation of faith and works. Faith is the life of works; works are the necessity of faith."

It cannot be too strongly insisted on, or too frequently urged, that they, and they only, who are disciples of Jesus, are called to, and fitted for, fellowship with Him in the great work to which He is pledged. If I am a disciple I am perforce a worker, for the new life which creates my personal discipleship is the very life of Christ—compassionate, mighty, victorious. If I am not a disciple, I cannot do the work of God, for I am devoid of that life which alone is the divine compassion for man, and the divine energy for accomplishing the purposes of God.

So much being granted, and the view gained that the disciple at work for the Master is really the Master working through the disciple—that is, that there is oneness, we may now proceed to consider the aim, the methods, the strength, and the issue of the disciple's work by a contemplation of the Master's.

(i.) Christ makes a great statement in John ix. 4: "We must work the works of Him that sent Me." This "we" of the Revised Version teaches us that Christ identifies us with Himself in His work; and we shall best understand the force of these words by gaining a clear understanding of their setting. Take the paragraph chapters viii. and ix. In chapter viii. 1-11 we have the account of Christ's dealing with the woman taken in adultery; in chapter ix. 6 and on, that of His giving sight to the blind man. Now, examine the part that intervenes. The opening statement (viii. 12) and the closing (ix. 5) are identical. Growing out of that statement in chapter viii. we have a long controversy on inherited religious privileges and divine Sonship. In chapter ix. the disciples' question is in the same realm, though it deals with the other side, that of inherited sin. Christ dismisses their speculations, and announces the fact of His work, and

proceeds to illustrate it by another example, which at once answers their quibbling and reveals that work. This blind man is, as every man is, a revelation of human condition, and an opportunity for the display of the work of God. What, then, is the work of God? The remedying of the limitation and evil that is in the world, and the restoration of the natural—that is the divine purpose. The illustration is simple. The underlying revelation is sublime. The divine rest of Gen. ii. 1, 2 was broken by man's sin. From that point God has been at work. "My Father worketh even until now, and I work" (John v. 17). This is not a small thing. It grasps all in its compass. It cost all in its effort. The cross is the supreme expression of that divine work, and that is only understood when it is seen as the eternal force by which man's ruin and limitation are overtaken, and the first divine ideal for humanity realised. In the disciples of Jesus there moves that great life that works with ceaseless and unconquerable energy. "Thy will be done, Thy kingdom come," is the disciple's prayer; it is also the aim of all his life and work. In the home, the business, the civic relation, national life, the Church, we are "workers together with Him," opening blind eyes, loosing prisoners, heal-

ing humanity's wounds, toiling ever on towards the morning without clouds, in which God will rest in the accomplishment of His purposes.

(ii.) If our aim is identical with that of the Master, it follows necessarily that our methods must be identical also. By reading carefully and in conjunction John v. 17-19 and xiv. 10, we find that all His works and words were done and spoken, not on His own initiative, but on the will of the Father. That is to say, Jesus not only worked towards the same great consummation as His Father, but along the same lines, by the same methods. How very wonderful are these words: "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing;" "The words that I say unto you I speak not from Myself"! From this position the enemy directly and indirectly perpetually sought to allure Him, and, thanks be to God, uniformly and absolutely failed. In the wilderness He declined the kingdoms of this world, even though for these He had come, on any condition, or by any method save the divinely marked. It is just here where the evil of the "mixed multitudes" in our churches is manifest. The true disciple must be as particular about the methods of work as about the final issue; but so many have caught some faint idea

of the divine intention, and now are prepared to adopt any method that seems politic and likely to achieve the end; and so the things that are worldly, sensual, devilish, are being pressed into the service of the Churches—choirs of professionals, who give performances for their own glory—entertainments which approach as nearly as possible to the world; bazaars—too often another name for illicit trading. The devil's most prolific move is the secularising of the things of God—tempting men to seek to possess the kingdom of Christ by falling down and worshipping him. The disciple worker will not expect to find any "near cuts" to success, any more than his Master did, but will travel over by the way of the Cross of Offence and the Resurrection of Power. The methods for the disciple are threefold, as it seems to me:—

(1) The example of the life, in all its details loyal to the Master.

(2) The influence exerted by the character that is perpetually growing in grace, by unbroken attention to the lessons of the Teacher, and the resultant incarnation of those lessons.

(3) The specific urging of the claims of Christ upon others, so that no day passes in which an effort is not made to win a soul for Christ,

by word spoken or written, or intercession with God.

(iii.) The next point is a remarkable one, and we approach it reverently, yet without hesitation. The strength in which the Master accomplished His work, is that by which we are to accomplish ours. It is worthy of special note that Luke, whose second treatise is that which gives us the account of the coming of the Holy Ghost, and of His acts through the first disciples, very clearly marks for us our Lord's dependence upon that same Spirit. In Luke iv. 1 we see Him returning from Jordan "full of the Holy Spirit," and "led by the Spirit in the wilderness." From that wilderness experience He enters upon the work of His public ministry; and in Luke iv. 14 we are told He did so "in the power of the Spirit"; and in the passage He read in the synagogue at Nazareth, He claims the anointing of the Spirit for service (Luke iv. 18). So, "full of the Spirit," He lived, and "led of the Spirit," He went fearlessly through all the great conflicts of human nature, and "anointed of the Spirit," He undertook all specific service. Before leaving His disciples, in those wonderful discourses John has recorded, He promised them that His Spirit should come "to be with them for ever" (John

xiv. 16), and that His mission should be to reveal to them the person and teaching of the Master (John xvi. 13, 14). Thus, then, the disciple goes forth to his work in the self-same strength as that in which the Master Himself went forth to His. The only understanding I can ever have of the purpose of God comes by the revealing of the Holy Spirit, and the only force by which I can accomplish anything is that of the self-same Spirit. What a glorious reserve of power there is in the Spirit-filled life and the Spirit-anointed worker! All life becomes part of the great divine activity. Daily duties can no longer be drudgery, for every commonplace contribution to the day's necessities is so much done, for the hour present, and for the ages to come, towards that great consummation for which God works. Special forms of service have new meaning and new delight, for no word inspired of the Spirit returns void, and no work energised by Him is lost or worthless.

(iv.) Of the issue of our work few words need be said. Again there is identity with Christ. "If we endure, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. ii. 12). If Christ ultimately fail, then the piece of work you did yesterday and are doing to-day will perish. If He accomplish all His great purpose, then nothing I have done towards His end,

by His methods, in His strength, can be lost. There will be a gracious and searching day of testing, when love will burn up the hay, the wood, the stubble, and purify, to the brightness of the very home of God, the gold and silver and precious stones.

Let us, then, do better work by living nearer to the King, and know more fully the privilege and joy of service by a completer abandonment to Him.

IX

THE DISCIPLE IN SORROW

"Yet sweeter even now to see Thy Face,
To find Thee now my rest—
My sorrow comforted in Thine embrace,
And soothed upon Thy breast.

Lord, there to weep is better than the joy
Of all the sons of men ;
For there I know the love without alloy,
I cannot lose again."—H. SUSO.

SORROW is the common heritage of humanity. In all ages, in all lands, under all conditions, man feels pain and suffers anguish. Is sorrow, then, a part of the original divine intention for man ? Does God take pleasure in human suffering in itself ? Assuredly not. He who created without sorrow will also wipe all tears away. And yet to-day sorrow is a divine provision, having an infinite meaning, and exerting a marvellous influence. What Cowper sang is certainly true :—

"The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
Leads to the land where sorrow is unknown ;
No trav'ler ever reached that blest abode,
Who found not thorns and briars on his road."

Sorrow came in the track of sin, not the companion and ally thereof, but God's quick messenger, a sense of loss, opening at once the door back to the heart and home of His love. Sorrow is a deep sense of loss, the consciousness of lack, the natural experience of a God-forsaken life. Had there been no dethronement of the King, there could have been no sorrow, for the whole being, still and quiet in Him, could have had no sense of loss. When man committed the act of high-treason by listening to a voice that called in question the love and wisdom of the divine authority, there sprang up in that instant the first sense of lust, ennui, hunger, and sorrow, and it took the form of a desire to know what God had not revealed. And when, following that desire, instead of returning then and there to allegiance, man passed through the door, seeking liberty, he found himself in a great darkling void without God, and yet possessed of a nature making demands perpetually that neither he himself nor any other could satisfy.

Sorrow, then, is the result of sin, but it is the benevolent, tender, purposeful messenger of the Eternal Love, Who cannot see His offspring lose all, without causing within them this sense of loss, and so ever by that means attracting them

homewards. Carry out that view of sorrow, and see how wondrously the person and work of Jesus agree thereto. The prophet, long before He came, spoke of Him, "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," and further declared, "Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows" (Isa. liii. 3, 4). Turning from that sacred foretelling of the purpose of Messiah's coming to the historical account of His life and work, I find the very heart and centre of it reached when, on Calvary's cross, He cried from the darkness into which He had passed, seeking that which was lost, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" That is the greatest sorrow of all; there, in the person of Christ, all humanity's sorrow and anguish and tears are centred. That is the expression of all agony. Beyond that, there is no sorrow; and that is also the great cry of humanity's sin: God dethroned by man; man forsaken by God. Beyond that there is nothing. So He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows in that awful hour when He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. There all the world's sin is borne and its sorrow felt. After that—silence. Surely a stillness in heaven, on earth, in hell—and then, "It is finished" from

His lips, and He, the conqueror, died by *laying down* His life. Sin is put away, and sorrow is recalled. Righteousness commences her new reign and joy follows in her wake; the glorious possibilities of humanity are opened up, for Christ has lived and died, and lives for ever now, and is a priest "after the power of an endless life" (Heb. vii. 16).

Yet while in that cross there was the rediscovery of God to man, and the rending of the veil for man's return, and all of healing provided, the appropriation of the purchased possession is, in the wisdom of God, secured by processes that cover centuries in man's measurement; and so sin is still here, and sorrow must therefore remain also. What, then, is the disciple's relation thereto?

(i.) To the disciple the realm of sorrow has become circumscribed, and that in a large measure. The great sorrows of humanity are personal and self-centred. Some loss experienced, some injury inflicted, some disappointment realised—these are the common causes of sorrow. In proportion as self is subdued and God enthroned in the life, this class of sorrows becomes obsolete. The soul finds its all in God increasingly, and so is able not merely to be resigned, but to

rejoice in denials as well as in blessings bestowed. Very slow we may be, even in the school of Jesus, but this is the growing experience of those who are learning of Him and are submissive to His teaching; and witnesses to the fact that God fills all the gaps, and brings the heart into perfect rest, are not wanting, neither are they few. "The heart at leisure from itself" is a heart that has so learned of Jesus as to rejoice in exactly the circumstances that in the old life caused the keenest sense of sorrow.

(ii.) From this is seen the mission of sorrow. It is ever a disciplinary force, drawing the heart more and more towards God, as it creates a sense of the holiness and uncertainty of all that has been held most dear. How wondrously this is manifest in the life of the believer! Take two persons—one whose will is rebellious and whose heart is unregenerate, the other a disciple of Jesus—and let them pass through identical experiences of bereavement, affliction, failure, and disappointment. In the one case the spirit becomes embittered and callous, and the character degenerates; in the other gentleness, love, tenderness are the results, and the very face catches a new glory and beauty. The one defiantly faces

sorrow, and, looking upon God's messenger as an enemy, attempts to destroy or banish it, and so sinks into hardness and hatred; the other is drawn to the heart of God, and finds the very pain is but God's fire for the destruction of dross, and so rises into that ineffable sweetness and love which is such a revelation of the power of the God of Love.

(iii.) What, then, is the secret of this effect of sorrow upon the life of the disciple? The companionship of Jesus. He who touched the inner heart of all the world's agony is ever present, understanding the very deep meaning of that pain, the absence of God; knowing that every form of anguish was expressed in that great cry on the cross; and then revealing Himself to whatever form of the need is present. In your darkest anguish, O believing heart, what healed you? Was it not that Christ said to you, "I am just what you have lost, and infinitely more"? and as you said, "Yes, my Lord, Thou art," did not all the horizon kindle with a new light, and all the pain as quietly ease as by the magic of His own touch?

(iv.) Looking back over our sorrows since we entered the school of Jesus, there is yet another truth to be recognised, and that is the fact of their transmutation. When the Master was about

to leave His earliest disciples, He said to them of the keenest pain of the time—the thought of His departure—“Your sorrow shall be turned into joy” (John xvi. 20). And was it not so? They learned in the coming of the Paraclete how expedient it was for them that He should go away; and so His going—their greatest grief—became to them, in His Ascension and the consequent coming of Himself, into nearer, dearer relation by the indwelling Spirit, their greatest joy. In that promise was there not a statement of the whole philosophy of pain to a believing, trusting heart? How perpetually sorrow is turned into joy! Mark—not sorrow removed, and so joy coming, but the sorrow itself becoming the joy. Have we not all had such experiences? Can we not look back and see that some of the hours that throbbed with agony were the most blessed of all the hours of life? That personal affliction, that grave, that blighting disappointment, that lonely hour of desolation—would you omit it from life’s experience if you could? No; a thousand times no. That affliction was my door to strength, that grave the prelude to resurrection power, that disappointment my finding His appointment, that lonely hour the one in which I found *Jesus only*.

And so I come to understand that sorrow means my ignorance, my limitation; and by faith I learn to triumph even in the hour of darkness, having learned that God's hand arranges warp and woof, and the perfect pattern He knoweth; and for the unfolding of that I wait and sing.

(v.) The disciple enters a new realm of sorrow. Union with Christ means a measure of "the fellowship of His sufferings" (Phil. iii. 10). "A heart at leisure from itself" is a heart to "soothe and sympathise." Free from the blight of sorrow, seeing my sorrows as His choicest gifts, and leaving them ever with Him, I come to understand the awful needs of humanity, and I go to His cross to be in some measure a sharer of His suffering for others. Out of that compassion comes all service that really does anything for humanity. There may be much activity in the self-life, but it is worth little. In the death of self on the cross the new pain begins; and, so long as I remain here, the sorrow and sin of the world must press on my heart, for His life now holds and governs it.

And what is the end? Through all earth's pain and anguish what is coming? Let a seer of the Old and New Covenants each answer:—

Isaiah: "The ransomed of the Lord shall return,

and come with singing unto Zion : and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads : they shall obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away " (Isa. xxxv. 10).

John : " And He shall wipe away every tear from their eyes ; and death shall be no more ; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more : the first things are passed away " (Rev. xxi. 4).

Hallelujah. Amen.

X

THE DISCIPLE IN JOY

“My heart is resting, O my God ;
I will give thanks and sing ;
My heart is at the secret source
Of every precious thing.”—ANNA L. WARING.

WHEN Eliphaz the Temanite said, “Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward” (Job v. 7), he gave utterance to a conclusion arrived at after careful observation of the common lot of man; he did not declare the birth to trouble to be an essential of human nature *per se*. Under existing conditions man is so born, but that is contrary to the original purpose of God for him. The divine intention is the joy, the happiness of all men. Sorrow is an interpolation in the divine plan, necessary and beneficent, as we saw in our last chapter. Joy is the normal condition of man, God’s highest work. Sad and sorrowful as the earth is to-day in all lands and climes, man’s capacity for joy is evinced in the fact that, in the vast majority of lives, there are more days

of happiness than sorrow. In the face of overwhelming disaster in all the regions of his being, man has set himself with indomitable courage to wrest happiness in some form out of his circumstances, and to cry, "Begone, dull care." Much of the so-called happiness of men is inexpressibly sad and poor and sinful, yet the fact remains that the great bulk of humanity has set itself to seek for happiness, and in that fact lies the proof that for joy man was at first created. Every form of enjoyment that man has devised for himself is his attempt to reconstruct out of hopeless wreckage and ruin the glorious past. Heart-breaking is the picture, yet it is a lurid and appalling testimony to the magnificent possibilities of his being. The man with the muck-rake, missing the true vision of glory and brightness in the crown held out to him, does nevertheless witness to his capacity for the crown, by his diligent attempt to gather the glitter of a straw, the colour of purple, the shimmer of tinsel. Following the argument that sorrow is a sense of loss, we say that joy is the true condition of God's humanity; and that, as sorrow entered with the loss of the sense of God, so joy is restored as man finds God.

(i.) The disciple restored to communion with

God is restored to the place of joy. That is a remarkable word which the apostle uses in writing to Timothy (1 Tim. i. 11), "The blessed God." It might correctly be translated "The happy God." It marks for us a great fact in the character of God. He is blessed for evermore, happy in the very essential of His nature. Creation complete, He saw it "very good"; and the "rest" of God was not recuperation after toil, but complacency, satisfaction, happiness in His work. The inspired seers of the past saw Him, and, though the surroundings of His throne were to them clouds and darkness, their conception of Him was ever that of glory, beauty, strength, love, peace, happiness. When man fell, that very happiness of God was the movement towards man's recovery. Read the closing words of Zephaniah's prophecy (iii. 14-20), especially noting the seventeenth verse: "He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; *He will joy over thee with singing.*" What words can be more beautifully expressive than these of His blessedness! When Jesus, the express image of the Father, came, He gave us in many a graphic picture the same conception. The glad Father, the rejoicing Shepherd, the happy woman, all teach the same truth. In the great charta of

the kingdom, He pronounces upon His disciples the same character. "Blessed" here may be as correctly rendered "Happy," and so those who are His to-day are restored to living communion with the "Happy God," and are thus themselves brought into the place where it becomes possible for them to obey the apostolic word, "Rejoice in the Lord alway: again I will say, Rejoice" (Phil. iv. 4).

All human joy is tarnished by the presence of the element of fear and dread. Man cannot escape from the deepest facts of his own nature, and therefore in the midst of every form of pleasure there comes the unnameable, disturbing element of fear and apprehension. This may be concisely stated by saying no man has power to perfectly enjoy the present who cannot look the future in the face with assurance. So long as the undiscoverable hour of death haunts the consciousness of man with a vague terror, every gladness may be blighted in a moment by the recurrence of thoughts which man would fain banish. I do not speak of low forms of enjoyment, but of high. Love, friendship, home, nature, art, music, all suggest to the unforgiven soul the awful possibility of cessation, and then the unknown to-morrow becomes the tarnish on

all gold, the blight on all fruit, the spectre of all hours. The disciple in union with Christ has found the solution of all this mystery. He is at peace with the end, and so is free for the true enjoyment of the "now." Because "to live is Christ," "to die is gain;" and because "to die is gain," life is worth living, for the spectre has been transformed into the gentle angel, who stands ever at the portal of larger and more generous life.

(ii.) Now, how does this actually affect the life of the disciple? This twofold fact, of communion with the blessed God and the consequent casting out of fear from the life, introduces into all pure human joy the element which perfects the same. The greatest of earth's joy is in earth's love. The ties of home and family, the communion of friend and lover, how immeasurably are these joys intensified to the believer! The union of two in marriage, based upon the law of supreme affection between two, when these are both united in Christ to God—how holy, and restful, and satisfying to the heart! The presence in the house of children, when they are recognised as gifts of the Eternal Love, to be nurtured for the King, what glorious and genial sunshine it is! The growth and development and success of these, when the King's

laws are observed, what pure and full joy they bring! And then the other great avenues of enjoyment—nature in her thousand varying moods, art in its wondrous possibilities, music in its interpretation of pure thought and high enthusiasm—how the disciple enters all, because in his relationship to Christ he holds the mystic key which admits him to their inner secrets. Surely everywhere and at all times the anointed soul can see, and hear, and touch, with keenness and precision such as is unknown apart from Christ. Never allow the enemy to suggest to you that discipleship is the limitation of joy. It is the one condition of human life to-day that opens every door of human delight, and permits man to walk in the splendid spaces, perfectly at home in the happiness of the “Happy God.”

(iii.) The greatness of this joy overtakes, and overwhelms, all the sorrows that remain to us. “How many children have you?” asked one of a Christian father. Hear the reply—“Seven; five live with me, and two with Jesus.” Surely this was rejoicing in sorrow. Did he not miss the prattle of the tongues now silent, and the patter of little feet? Assuredly he did from his own home; but he heard them still by faith in the palace home of God; and the joy of possessing

some treasure of his very own there was more than compensation. The joy of sorrow lies, moreover, in the fact that it preludes and prepares for the joy beyond. Of our beloved Lord it is said, "Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame"; and that marks our glad pathway through all the disciplinary sorrow of probationary days. To us on every sorrow falls the light of the joy beyond, and that not merely as compensation, but as result. So, while we are oftentimes "sorrowful," we are "yet always rejoicing."

(iv.) In our last study we spoke of the new sorrow that comes to the disciple in communion with Christ, viz., that of sympathy with all the sin and sorrow of suffering humanity. Now, we must also recognise the new joy that springs out of service. To me it is difficult to speak or write of that joy. Have you ever led one soul to Christ? Then you know more than all words can teach you of the essence of real joy. To tell the evangel, to pray with the seeker, to travail in birth for souls, to see the breaking of the light of God, to find another passing to His kingdom—this is life and joy indeed. Paul, the great missionary, the man who so wondrously, in those days of suffering and peril, laid his whole being upon the altar of his

Master's cross for others' blessing, could think of no greater joy in heaven than that of souls new born through his toil and suffering. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye, before our Lord Jesus at His coming? For ye are our glory and our joy" (1 Thess. ii. 19, 20).

And surely that joy is the divine joy. It is over a redeemed people that God "joys with singing"; and it is in the accomplishment of the great purposes of the Eternal Love that the Master "shall see of the travail of His soul, and *be satisfied.*"



XI

THE DISCIPLE GOING HOME

“Soon the whole,
Like a parchèd scroll,
Shall before my amazèd sight uproll,
And, without a screen,
At one burst be seen
The Presence wherein I have ever been.”
—THOMAS WHYTEHEAD.

WHEN Bernard of Cluny wrote—

“Brief life is here our portion,”

as the opening words of his great hymn, he penned a fact that is an abiding consciousness with men of all ages and every clime. The glory of the hope and certainty of the faith which characterise that hymn are beyond the experience of thousands; but that first statement finds an affirmative echo in every heart, whenever and wherever sung. That life is passing, the number of our appointed years becoming smaller by a perfectly quiet and orderly yet irrevocable and absolutely unalterable sequence, every person knows full

well. That the last year, the last break of day, the last moment will come, and, moreover, that not a single one among the millions of the race now moving on towards the end can tell the year or day or hour of that end—these are solemn and self-evident truths.

That end, called death, is at once the greatest certainty and the greatest mystery of all. To the consciousness of the natural man there is no escape from it, and yet around it has gathered, for the thinkers of all ages and the teachers of all systems, and for those also, the many who will not think, and who seek no teachers, a great darkness and mystery, so that man naturally shrinks from it, and by every means in his power seeks to put off the day which is the last. Yet, as man strives to do this, he knows how futile is the strife; and so, by a sort of common consent, unwritten and yet binding, man is endeavouring by a forced forgetfulness to banish death and its awful dread. What, then, is the attitude of the disciple towards this fact of the onward movement of this present life towards an end?

(i.) The answer may be very briefly stated first as a matter of fact. The disciple dares contemplate that end; no longer shrinking from thought of it, he calmly faces it, questions it, smiles at it,

and, standing in its presence, confronts it without fear or fainting. More than that, the disciple thus facing the end, from that very contemplation seems to catch a new radiance, as of a light that never was on land or sea, his gaze, into what the world has ever thought of as dark and mysterious, giving to his eye a brightness, which tells of visions that add their lustre, and their hope, to all the experiences of the passing hour, so that to him the contemplation of the end, instead of shadowing all the pleasures of the moment, fills the darkest day with light, and makes every hour of sorrow an occasion of rejoicing. To the truth of this the experience of the Master Himself, and the writers of the New Testament, and the followers of Jesus in each successive century bear unequivocal testimony. Let us confine ourselves to the experience of the Lord, and the testimony of New Testament writers. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews (xii. 2) gives us an inspired and remarkable vision of our Lord's view of the end of His human life. He saw the "cross" and "shame," and "endured" the one, "despising" the other, for the "joy" that was set before Him. Of course this has a much wider application, but it certainly contains this revelation of our Master's view of the end of His life—the

darkest and most mysterious end of all—that what bulked most largely on His vision was a “joy” that lit the darkness, and negatived the “shame.”

The experience of the writers of the New Testament, as revealed in their writings, is on the same plane. Paul's writings abound with such conceptions: “I reckon that the sufferings . . . are not worthy to be compared with the glory . . . (Rom. viii. 18). “To die is gain” (Phil. i. 21). “My departure is come, . . . henceforth . . . the crown” (2 Tim. iv. 6, 8). These passages should, of course, be read in their entirety, and they are but examples of many others all revealing the same truth. Peter, looking forward, speaks of “a living hope, . . . an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away” (1 Pet. i. 3-9). James lights up the darkness of trying circumstances with the thought of the end, saying, “Be patient . . . until the coming of the Lord” (v. 7). John, exulting in present blessedness, views the end, and from the vision gathers new hope and purifying power: “Beloved, now are we children of God, . . . we *shall be* like Him” (1 John iii. 2). Jude sees beyond the present period of growth one of perfection: “Him that is able . . . to set you before the presence of His glory without

blemish" (ver. 24). To this strong, courageous, and victorious outlook of the earliest saints may be added the testimony of the disciples of all the ages.

(ii.) So far we have made a statement only. Let us now endeavour to understand this attitude of the Lord and His disciples. There are two statements of the New Testament which are so remarkable on account of their clear unmistakable meaning, that we will consider *them* only, as being sufficient to account for all we have said. The first is contained in the words of Jesus Himself to Martha at the grave of Lazarus (John xi. 26). Let us, in all simplicity and straightforwardness, read these words, "Whosoever . . . believeth in Me *shall never die.*" The other is a statement by Paul (2 Tim. i. 10): ". . . Our Saviour Christ Jesus, who *abolished death.*"

Nothing can be simpler or more forceful. Our Lord, speaking to Martha, meant just what the words convey in our translation, that to the soul believing on Him there is no dying. Death is not to that soul what it seems to humanity at large. The life that one already lives is the very life of God and eternity, and there is no death. That is precisely the thought of Paul. The word

"abolished" literally means rendered entirely useless, robbed of its power to act.

(iii.) How has this been brought about, and how are the disciples of Jesus able to appropriate the stupendous miracle as an experience? On the day of Pentecost Peter declared the fact of the resurrection of Jesus, not only to be the work of God, but to have been an absolute necessity by virtue of what Jesus was in Himself (Acts ii. 24): "Whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because *it was not possible that He should be holden of it.*" So much for the reason of the Master's own view of the future. Now read Heb. ii. 14, 15: "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same: that through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." There we see how through His death He has given us victory over death, and taken from us its fear. Before He left His disciples He made that great declaration, "Because I live, ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19). Therefore we are brought into the place of His victorious life, through the overcoming of His victorious death.

If, then, He has abolished death, what now remains? It is still certain that these probationary days will end, this life of limitation and testing come to a conclusion, all this changing scene pass away, and still it is true that the end is not known as to its time. Wherein do we differ, then, as disciples of Jesus, from the crowd? In this, that instead of death being the end, *He* Himself stands waiting for us and ever approaches us; and whether we are among the number of those "that are alive, that are left unto the coming of the Lord," or "them that are fallen asleep," still the end of the present is Himself, for to *sleep* is just to be "absent from the body, at home with the Lord," not to die; and to remain to His coming is just to "meet the Lord in the air." So when evening comes to the disciple, and he turns his back upon the glories of the western sky and faces the east, it is not cold, and dark, and cheerless, but full of light, for the Sun fills all the horizon; and so to the child of trust "there is no night."

Disciples, then, are not called upon to prepare for death, but for *Him*; and that hope purifies, refines, illumines all the hours with the radiance of the Eternal Day. We cannot fear death then, for to us all is changed. The end has become

the beginning; mystery is transformed into the vestibule of revelation; rest from labour is entry upon highest work; and at eventide there is the light of the Eternal Morning in which is the disciple's Home.

XII

THE DISCIPLE IN GLORY

“ Bear me on thy rapid wing,
Everlasting Spirit,
Where the choirs of angels sing,
And the saints inherit !”—ANON.

How little we know, comparatively, of the hereafter. “ Life and incorruption have been brought to light ” in the Gospel of Jesus, and death has been transformed from a foe to a friend ; but the revelation is characterised by its silence with regard to the future rather than by its declarations. It is as though God would not draw men towards righteousness either by threatened punishment or promised reward. Enough, however, has been said to give us to understand the terrors of being lost and the blessedness of being saved.

Of the occupation of the disciple of Jesus in the life that lies beyond more has been said than appears on the surface. There is one passage of Scripture which is constantly being half-quoted, or quoted from the Old Testament, when surely we should quote it with Paul’s ex-

pository word. Let us examine this (Isa. lxiv. 4): "For since the beginning of the world, men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside Thee what He hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him." Now, to whatever that may refer, Paul, writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. ii. 9, 10), distinctly goes on to say, that these hidden things are revealed to us by the Spirit; and yet this quotation is used almost invariably to prove that we can know nothing of the future of the blessed. Again, let closer attention be given to these passages, and the correct and much more beautiful rendering of the Revised Version be accepted, and it will at once be discovered that there is no reference whatever, either by Isaiah or in Paul's use of Isaiah's words, to the future life. Both are referring to the wonders of the wonder-working God in the progress of events which men could not perceive or hear, save by the Spirit of God, who revealed them in due time to those who waited for Him. That men did not see the working of God in history, witness the attitude of the disciples of Jesus until the Holy Spirit came and illuminated that history. This is the broad principle of the teaching of the passages, and it may be applied to the case now under

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consideration. To the casual, unenlightened reader, the Scripture says very little of the future; to the Spirit-taught it says far more than we can comprehend; and the purpose of this chapter is to indicate the lines of that teaching rather than to attempt to exhaust the great theme. In our first ten divisions we have dealt with the disciple in his probationary life: that is by far, and of necessity, the smaller part of his existence. Probation is of the greatest importance; but it ever pre-supposes something far more important, stretching out beyond; and the great fact of discipleship is, that it is a process of preparation of one who is not a citizen of the earth, of one whose home and place of service lie out beyond the shadows that seem to bound the vision to-day. In our last chapter we have seen him meeting the Master at the end of probation. May we now close this study by very reverently looking within the veil, so far as it has been lifted, at the occupation and final destiny of those who, through all this gracious discipline, have been so patiently trained by the greatest of all, nay, the only Teacher of humanity.

(i.) The abolishing of death makes it perfectly certain that there can be no unconscious gap in the existence of the believer. What we have too

constantly spoken of as death, by virtue of its being the meeting of the disciple and his Lord—without the limitations of material trammels, which are always in some sense a clog to the development of the Spirit-life, in that state where faith is lost in sight, and hope in full fruition dies,—becomes clearer, fuller consciousness. The phrases of the New Testament which describe that state, give us most suggestive and valuable teaching concerning it. Let us take two of these, both from the writings of Paul.

(1) 2 Cor. v. 8: "Absent from the body . . . at home with the Lord." This use of the phrase "at home," instead of the word "present," as in the Authorised Version, is necessary to ensure consistency of translation for the whole passage, as it is the same word translated "at home" in verse 6. What a perfect and beautiful thought of the first consciousness of the disciple in that larger life! "At home." The word analysed conveys the idea of being among one's own people, and that is the true thought. We move in that gracious transition into the condition of being perfectly at rest in the Lord's presence. In all the high spiritual aspects of our life we have been strangers here. There, we shall be "at home." Here, our relationships have been those of so-

journalers in tents, strangers; and our sense of the Lord's presence, blessed as it has been, compared to what it will be then, has been partial, limited. There, we shall fit into all the conditions towards which He has led us, and for which He has trained us, and so there, we shall first fully comprehend the meaning of much of the training of to-day. Oh, the luxury of it! Only those who have been away from their earthly homes for a while know how intensely sweet is the sense of being "at home" again—the one atmosphere in which there is freedom from the sense of disquietude and unrest. And yet more marvellous is the grace of it. The "at home" just beyond the shadows is "with the Lord." That I, who feared and shunned, and, alas! slighted and contemned Him, am at last to be "at home" with Him, passes all telling in its evidence of His great grace.

(2) Phil. i. 23: "To depart, and be with Christ." This word to depart is undoubtedly used here in the sense of loosing a ship from its moorings, and so Tennyson repeated the Pauline conception when he wrote—

"And let there be no moaning of the bar
When I put out to sea,
And may there be no sadness of farewell
When I embark."

What, then, is this embarking and unloosing?
Do I drift into unconsciousness for a season?
No, I am with Christ.

“I hope to see my Pilot face to face,
When I have crossed the bar.”

Note the immediateness of it. Dr. Moule says, “Not a space, but a mathematical line, divides the state of faith this side death from the state of sight that side.” So, then, the first consciousness of the disciple in the new life, is that of the Master, in clear and unclouded vision.

(ii.) What, then, is the present condition and occupation of those who have departed? Between the time of their leaving this scene and the morning of the Resurrection there is an interval. It is an interval of incompleteness, for as yet they have not received their Resurrection bodies. We have already seen that this interval is spent in a closer connection with and clearer vision of Christ. The nature of the occupation is the subject of our consideration now. In the closing words of Hebrews xi. (verses 30 and 40), a great principle is declared with regard to those who have gone before. Its application by the writer of this Epistle is to that great company of the heroes and heroines of faith of whom he has been speak-

ing. It may also safely be applied to all those who in this Christian era have fallen on sleep or will do so, "that apart from us they should not be made perfect." In this application of the passage we are to understand that the perfecting of the disciples will only be when the Lord gathers to Himself the whole company of them. The occupation, therefore, of those who thus wait, in blessedness, for the end of the age, and the gathering into the glory of the whole Church of Christ, may be gathered by a line of reasoning, to the correctness of which Scripture itself bears testimony.

They are closer to Christ, and therefore their understanding of His work and service must be much clearer. This better knowledge must necessarily produce a deeper sympathy. The first propulsion of the Christ-life in the soul of the regenerate on earth, was a movement of compassion towards the souls for whom He died, and an act of service on their behalf in some definite form or other. Now that their possession by Christ is so much more complete, it surely follows that their love for those whom He so wondrously loves is far more intense. Can we possibly think of them as having this deeper love and yet being inactive? Assuredly not. The things that interest and

occupy Him, must interest and occupy them supremely: and so we can only think of them as raised into a region of higher service within the same great redemptive circle in which they moved while still on the earth. I give it as my firm conviction, that all our loved ones gone before are serving the cause of the work and purpose of God among men, in a better way than they ever did while sojourners here below. Does not this view light up for us many dark events in our own lives? Those whom God has wondrously blessed here, and then suddenly called away, just when we were feeling they could not be spared, have not ceased their work as we thought, but have been promoted to some higher place and work. To this view of the occupation of the departed that word of Rev. xiv. 13 agrees: "That they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with them." The immediate application is to the number of the saints who will suffer martyrdom in a subsequent era, but the truth has a present application as well, and the inner teaching may perhaps best be gathered by a paraphrase, the result of a careful analysis of the words actually used: "They rest from that toil which is painful and reduces the strength, but their works, their activities, accompany them." That is to say their

activity does not cease, but only that form of it which brings weariness and suffering; and so we think of beloved servants of God, singers, teachers, preachers, suddenly, and to all human seeming, prematurely, removed from earth, no longer as beyond the province of redemptive service, but as more than ever fully occupied in clearer light and fuller opportunity.

(iii.) This condition of incompleteness for them and for us will end when "the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we that are alive, that are left, shall together with them be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. iv. 16, 17). It is there that the Church will be gathered into one complete and conscious whole—

"Some from earth, from glory some,
Severed only till He come."

And so He will "present the Church to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing" (Eph. v. 27).

That will be an event of the utmost importance, as we shall now see, in its bearing on the future.

(iv.) That surely is finality. No, everything lies beyond that in the vocation of the Church. All to that point in the history of individual disciples, and of the whole Church has been preparatory. It is then that the Church is ready to begin her great mission in the purpose and counsel of God. The letter to the Ephesians is specially occupied in dealing with this great and stupendous fact. The first three chapters deal with the vocation in itself, and the remainder make application of the fact of that calling to all the detailed life of the believer in view thereof, while yet in this place of preparation and discipline. Let us then, in concluding this study on discipleship, very reverently read the words in the first three chapters of that epistle which light up for us the great future.

Eph. i. 18.—In this verse occurs a phrase full of suggestiveness, and leading to the statements which follow: "The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." That our inheritance is in Him, it is easy for us to understand; but we are at once arrested by the statement that He has an inheritance in us. And yet that is the fact. God has an inheritance in His people, and Paul's prayer is that these Ephesian Christians may have "the eyes of their heart enlightened,

that they may know what is the hope of His calling, what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe." The "calling" of God is the vocation of the Church. As the Church fulfils that vocation, God will enter into His inheritance in her. This will be realised by the power "which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead." In the paragraphs which follow, Paul proceeds to deal with the final purpose of God, and with the process by which this will be achieved. We are now interested only in the final purpose, in the fulfilling of which, God will Himself possess His inheritance in His people, and so we take the three verses which declare it.

Eph. ii. 7 : "That in the ages to come He might shew the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." The phrase "in the ages to come" has reference to the ages of the eternal future. What future dispensations there may be, and what the movement of the ages, none can tell but God Himself. Whatever these may be, the Church is to be the medium of showing forth therein "the riches of His grace." When those ages are to learn the love of God's heart, they are to do so by the testimony borne by the

ransomed Church to His "kindness toward us in Christ Jesus." Our vocation, then, contains within it, the mission of showing to the ages yet unborn that love of God which He has exhibited to us in Jesus.

Eph. iii. 10: " . . . Now unto the principalities and the powers in the heavenly places might be made known through the church the manifold wisdom of God." This reveals another phase of vocation. The Church is to reveal to the unfallen intelligences, the principalities and powers of the heavenlies, the manifold wisdom of God. These shining ones, whose glories so far exceed anything of which we have dreamed, whose powers of comprehension are so wondrous, will only know through the revelation of the Church, in all its fulness, the manifold wisdom of God.

Eph. iii. 21: "Unto Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever." Briefly stated, then, the vocation of the Church, beyond all the preparation of this life, beyond that intermediate state in which some now are, in that time when the Church shall be completed and complete, is to reveal the grace and wisdom of God to the beings of other dwelling-places, the high unfallen ones of the heavenlies, and that not to one age only, but to the ages of the

ages as they are known only to the mind of God. In all eternity, that great "Now" of God, embracing our "past" and "future," there has been no such proof of the grace of His heart, and the wisdom of His workings, as that of the ransoming and uplifting in spotless purity of fallen man, and those so ransomed and uplifted are to be the witnesses to the great future of intelligence concerning these wondrous and overwhelming truths. What an enormous range of possibility does this view of the Church's future open up before our vision! Our finite surroundings make it impossible for us to comprehend all the infinite spaces that appear only to us as blue sky or darkling night. What worlds are there, what high forms of pure spirits, what spaces still beyond, and what yet deeper spheres of habitable places! Thought is bewildered at the daring of its own flight. Then what changes and movements among all these in the procession of the ages! Remember, that to these worlds, and these beings, and these ages, we are to be the messengers of the grace and wisdom and glory of God. In that view the future loses its sense of dread, and one looks on to the new opportunities for art, and music, and poetry, and, above all, perchance, of preaching, that are coming to the ransomed ones when the discipline of time is merged

into the fitness of eternity, with reverent and holy desire.

Some one may say that is pure imagining. Well, it certainly is imagination well within the limit of the possibilities of these words of the apostle, who had been caught up into the third heaven, and had seen things unutterable. Mark how he closes this section.

Eph. iii. 20, 21: "Now unto Him that is able to *do* exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or *think*, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus unto all generations for ever and ever."

So that the wildest flights of thought are far short of the possibilities of what God is able "to do."

This is but a faint glimpse, then, of the glory of which Paul said, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed to us-ward" (Rom. viii. 18); but it is enough to turn the heart of the disciple with fuller purpose of consecration to that Beloved One, Who, with a perfect knowledge of that future, too splendid yet for our comprehension, is teaching and training us ever with that in view.

How better can we close this contemplation of Discipleship, in its beginning, progress, and consummation, than in the words of Paul to these Ephesians (iv. 1): "I therefore . . . beseech you to walk worthy of the *vocation* wherewith ye were called"!

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